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**OF BLUE BADGES AND PURPLE CLOTH
THE IMPACT OF BATTLE DEATH IN A
COHESIVE UNIT**

**A Monograph
by
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Military Police**



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The study concludes that the U.S. Army must vigilantly guard against any policy, or organization which does not reinforce the cohesiveness of the small unit. The universe of the soldier revolves around his squad and platoon. It is at this level that group bonding is achieved, group norms are defined, and standards of behavior are set. It is at this level that relationships are determined, and it is at this level that much of the Army's combat effectiveness is defined. The U.S. Army must continually strengthen its squads and platoons if it is to succeed on the future battlefield.

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ABSTRACT

This study is an examination of the impact of battle death in a cohesive unit. The American soldier will fight on a future battlefield that is extended, lethal, and isolated. To operate effectively he will be dispersed in small, cohesive military units. Given the anticipated nature of the future battlefield, will battle death seriously degrade the combat effectiveness of surviving soldiers in small, cohesive units?

The research question is answered by examining the impact of combat death on both the individual and the unit. Military theory sets the necessary foundation for this project and is followed by an examination of studies from World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. The study then considers the outcomes from the National Training Center and analyzes the future battlefield. Conclusions are drawn from a synthesis of the material and implications for the future are presented.

The findings reveal that military cohesion and motivation are rooted in intensely personal attachments at the small-unit level. History shows that the key to understanding the problem of death in a cohesive unit is that the danger of being killed or maimed imposes a strain so great that it may cause the soldier to break down. Likewise, casualties occurring to primary group members in the cohesive unit produce more fear than those which occur to members of a group with whom an individual is less closely bound. Of all the causes of breakdown in combat, the death of a soldier's buddy has the most powerful impact. The possibility of seeing his buddy killed and the threat to his own existence are ever present realities for the soldier in combat. It is this fear of death or injury which makes combat so harassing an experience. Death, therefore, will seriously degrade the cohesive bonds of the average military unit.

The study concludes that the U.S. Army must vigilantly guard against any policy, or organization which does not reinforce the cohesiveness of the small unit. The universe of the soldier revolves around his squad and platoon. It is at this level that group bonding is achieved, group norms are defined, and standards of behavior are set. It is at this level that relationships are determined, and it is at this level that much of the Army's combat effectiveness is defined. The U.S. Army must continually strengthen its squads and platoons if it is to succeed on the future battlefield.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>CHAPTER</u>	<u>PAGE</u>
Title Page	i
Approval Page	ii
Abstract	iii
Table of Contents	iv
Introduction	1
Theoretical Foundation	4
World War II	10
The Korean War	18
The Vietnam War	22
Contemporary Scene	26
The Future Battlefield	29
Conclusions	32
Implications	34
Endnotes	39
Bibliography	45

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INTRODUCTION

Coming to grips with the thought of dying is not an easy task for a soldier. It is difficult for him to accept the death of his close friends and even more difficult to comprehend his own demise. But those who venture into battle should recognize that death will be there. Death is a companion to combat soldiers more than it is to most other professionals. War is a deadly serious business and most warriors recognize that their life, and the lives of their comrades, may be forfeited to the cause for which they are fighting.

Death in combat is not a particularly pretty sight. It does not display the peaceful, peacetime sleep that is familiar to most who have participated in the rituals of passing. Rather, it is a ghastly apparition that few are prepared for. The clean flesh wound is a figment of the imagination as combat death is characterized by torn muscle, smashed bones, and bodies angled in awkward positions that beg attention. Combat death lingers. The victims are not rapidly removed from the scene as in a traffic accident. The area is not roped off, and no one has the time to deal with the cadavers until the fighting ceases.

The severity of death in combat can have profound effects.

Joseph Stalin once claimed that millions dead is only a statistic, but one death may be a tragedy of untold proportions. (1) The irony of the assertion lies in its truth. The death of millions of strangers every year passes relatively unnoticed, but the death of someone close takes a long time to heal for those who survive the combat experience.

Combat is a struggle to survive. It is a struggle of man against man, and man against nature. It is a struggle of men trying to "reconcile their instinct for self-preservation and their sense of honor for the achievement of an aim over which other men are ready to kill." (2) It is a struggle in which men band together into cohesive units to combine their abilities with those of other men in order to obtain the strength that comes from solidarity.

The strength and solidarity that a military unit maintains is a measure of its combat effectiveness. Combat effectiveness is defined as "the ability of a unit to perform its mission." (3) The military unit is the key to success on the battlefield. If it can maintain its structural identity, the military unit provides relative order to the chaos and turmoil of combat. The unit establishes the tactics, techniques, and procedures for dealing with the combat situation. To remain effective, a military unit must maintain its cohesiveness.

A cohesive military unit is characterized by the interpersonal bonds which the members develop for each other and

for the unit. The stronger the bonds, the more cohesive the unit. The unit plays a key role in the bonding process. It establishes and emphasizes the group's standards of behavior, it supports and sustains the individual in combat, and it provides coping mechanisms for dealing with stresses the soldier would otherwise not be able to withstand. (4) Membership in and acceptance by the unit, be it a squad, platoon, or company, is a key element of cohesion.

In their post World War II study, Edward A. Shils and Morris Janowitz determined that four factors enhanced small unit cohesion. Cohesion was strengthened by physical closeness, by the capacity for interpersonal communications, by the provision of protection from senior officers and noncommissioned officers, and by the gratification of certain personality needs such as the opportunity to display manly toughness. (5) They found that the solidarity of the small unit was what kept men soldiering on against forbidding odds. (6)

Yet the solidarity of the primary group is tenuous and can be undermined. If the American soldier goes to war, he will have to maintain his combat effectiveness and that of his unit in a most fearful environment. The modern battlefield, by design, will be lethal, extended, isolated, and deadly. The question is, given the nature of this battlefield, will battle death seriously degrade the combat effectiveness of surviving soldiers in small, cohesive units?

This question will be answered by examining the impact of combat death on both the individual and the unit. Military theory will be used to address the impact of death in combat, followed by an examination of research on this subject during World War II, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War. This approach sets the groundwork for analyzing how the future battlefield will differ from those in the past. Conclusions will be drawn from a synthesis of the material presented and implications for the future will be suggested. Our analysis begins with theory.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

Military theory provides a set of principles that clarify concepts and ideas relating to the conduct of war and the use of fighting forces. (7) Military theory has addressed the subject of death in combat since earliest times. Contemporary theory on the subject finds its roots in the theory of the past. The impact of death in combat has been recognized by Sun Tzu, Clausewitz, du Picq, Marshall, and Keegan, among others. Their writings indicate that the chief impact of death is in the will to fight, sometimes referred to as the moral domain of war. Among the earliest writers on the subject was Sun Tzu.

Sun Tzu's, The Art of War, addresses the subject of death in combat from both its moral and tactical aspects. As a theorist,

he was the first to acknowledge that the need for leaders to motivate their combatants was the essence of the moral domain of war. "By moral influence I mean that which causes the people to be in harmony with their leaders, so that they will accompany them in life and unto death without fear of mortal peril." (8) In this one sentence he shows his awareness of the necessity for leadership and cohesiveness in the face of death and danger. As a warrior, he recognized that the tactical situation and the type of battlefield the soldier was on would influence the nature of the fight. Where there is no chance for survival, where there is no other alternative, it is in the nature of soldiers to resist to the end. (9) Sun Tzu recognized that soldiers "in death ground, fight." (10)

Subsequent military theorists, either deliberately or by default, downplayed the moral domain in war. The moral domain was not emphasized in military writings until Karl von Clausewitz underscored that "war brings to the fore some of the most powerful emotions known to man, including fear, anger, vindictiveness, and hatred." (11) Clausewitz identified these subjective forces as the most decisive, yet by the same token, the most misunderstood forces of the scientifically oriented soldiers and historians of his era. (12)

After Clausewitz, the moral domain and the impact of death in combat were not addressed until Colonel Ardant du Picq wrote Battle Studies, Ancient and Modern Battles in the 1860's. Among

his many contributions was the recognition that "man has a horror of death" (13) and that the mass of people "always cowers at sight of the phantom, death." (14) Colonel du Picq felt that overcoming the fear of death on the battlefield depended "on surveillance and the mutual supervision of groups of men who knew each other well." (15) He felt that the discipline to advance in the face of death depended on the moral pressure to motivate men from either fear or pride. (16)

Colonel du Picq predicted the basic theory of small unit cohesion which, as we shall see, emerged as lessons from World War II, Korea, and Viet Nam.

A wise organization insures that the personnel of combat groups changes as little as possible, so that comrades in peacetime maneuvers shall be comrades in war. From living together, and obeying the same chiefs, from commanding the same men, from sharing fatigue and rest, from cooperation among men who quickly understand each other in the execution of warlike movements, may be bred brotherhood, professional knowledge, sentiment, above all unity. (17)

The basis for unit disintegration was also identified by du Picq. When "death is in the air, invisible and blind, whispering, whistling" (18) and "with his (the soldier's) comrades in danger, brought together under unknown leaders, he feels the lack of union and wonders if he can count on them." (19) This mistrust leads to hesitation, which in turn, kills the offensive spirit of the unit.

Colonel du Picq, like Sun Tzu and Clausewitz, was a professional soldier who knew first hand the fears and misgivings

of being in combat. Colonel du Picq was killed in action defending Metz during the Franco-Prussian War.

Another seasoned soldier who studied the cohesion of small units in combat was Brigadier General S.L.A. Marshall. He declared that, "Victory (the ultimate measure of combat effectiveness) can be won only after the battle has been delivered into the hands of men who move in imminent danger of death." (20) It is the morale of these men that counts. Marshall felt strongly that among fighting men, morale endures only so long as the chance remains that ultimately their weapons will render greater death or fear of death on the enemy. When that chance dies, morale dies and defeat occurs. (21)

Marshall's research on combat effectiveness emphasized the importance of small unit cohesion. He determined that in battle a soldier is influenced by the small circle of persons whom he believes will affect his immediate fortunes. (22) His thesis in Men Against Fire was that the infantry soldier can be trained to anticipate fully the true conditions of the battlefield. In the absence of this training, the alternative was trial and error. (23) He felt that the most serious and repeated breakdowns in combat were due to a failure to control human nature and that training which reinforced the cohesiveness of the small unit was the best prescription to prevent this breakdown. (24)

The study of human nature is central to an understanding of what motivates men on the battlefield. Studies by the U.S. Army

have led it to the general acceptance of A.H. Maslow's "Hierarchy of Needs" to explain the theory of motivation and cohesion. (25) Maslow's model recognizes the importance of the drive for survival as a basic motivator. Individuals are motivated by two generic types of needs, the physical and learned needs. In order of precedence, the physical needs include the need to survive and be safe while the learned needs include the need for belongingness, self-esteem, and self-actualization. Maslow stated that the more basic needs were the predominant motivators until they were satisfied, at which time the next higher need would become the motivator. In combat, the physical and learned needs operate in conflict and provide the cognitive dissonance of flight versus fight on the battlefield. (26)

In the ideological realm, Major David A. Fastabend supports the predominance of Maslow's hierarchy. "Ideology may draw an individual toward combat but once in the environment of violence his 'directed will' is towards self-preservation. Self-preservation is the 'golden idea' that violence presents as a favorable alternative to the individual's original idea set." (27) Says Fastabend, "Operational artists must circumvent this problem by designing weapons, tactics, and organizations so that the self-preservation instinct reinforces group goals." (28)

From this we derive the fact that protection is a fundamental need in battle. Colonel Trevor N. Dupuy tells us that the killing and wounding capacity of modern weapons will ensure

high rates of casualties within hours after hostilities begin. The wounded-to-killed ratio in twentieth century warfare has been consistent at 4:1. Roughly 20% of the battle casualties are killed outright. Even with only minimal care, about 65% of the wounded survive. This leaves about 15% of those hit as being seriously wounded and not likely to live without extensive medical treatment. Recent medical improvements have lowered this latter figure to 3%. Thus, a soldier has roughly a 77% probability of surviving his wounds. (29)

Major William Stewart used historical data to support Dupuy's hypothesis. His findings revealed that there is a constant but dynamic relationship among three major characteristics of combat: firepower, mobility, and dispersion. He surmised that decreasing densities of men and weapons on the battlefield will explain the phenomenon of constant or declining attrition rates, while the lethality of weapons is increasing. (30)

Military theory suggests that the chief impact of death in a cohesive unit is in the moral domain -- the will to fight. In order to maintain their combat effectiveness, small units will have to be trained to anticipate the true conditions of the battlefield. Leaders will have to maintain the cohesion of the primary group and provide for the protection for their units in a lethal environment. If they do not, the morale of the combatants will be undermined and the combat effectiveness of their units will diminish. The review of theory, as it pertains to death and

small cohesive units, sets the context in which the lessons of World War II can be examined.

WORLD WAR II

World War II, the best documented war in American history, witnessed the first major effort by the U.S. Army to determine what made its soldiers fight and what made the enemy's soldiers fight. The best effort to examine primary group cohesion in military units was conducted by Samuel A. Stouffer, Edward A. Suchman, Leland C. DeVinney, Shirley A. Star, and Robin M. Williams, Jr. who compiled the research for The American Soldier: Adjustment During Army Life, hereinafter called the "Stouffer Study." This landmark study of hundreds of U.S. combatants proved that the primary group was the main factor in combat cohesion. Due to the U.S. Army's World War II individual replacement system and its policy of keeping divisions in protracted combat, the primary group tended to be small, found generally at the squad [8-12 men] or platoon [25-40 men] level. (31)

The Stouffer Study determined that combat was a disturbing experience for the individual soldier because of the danger of death or injury. Inescapable fear and anxiety reactions arose from continual exposure to indiscriminate danger. The threat of being maimed, of unbearable pain, and of being killed, brought intense

fear reactions. In this environment, soldiers who were unable to control their fear were likely to react to combat in a way which could be catastrophic for themselves and for their units. (32)

To minimize the potential damage of these disruptive fear reactions, the U.S. Army encouraged soldiers to adopt a permissive attitude toward their own fear symptoms. The Army trained men for combat by providing instruction on appropriate behavior in different combat situations and exposed soldiers to various battle stimuli. The object was to familiarize the soldier with an idea of what to expect in combat before the fact. (33)

World War II Army doctrine held that soldiers need not be ashamed of feeling afraid in dangerous situations, that fear was normal, and that it was shared by everyone exposed to combat. If the soldier could not take the stress of combat, he was treated as a legitimate casualty rather than as a coward. The Stouffer Study determined that the majority of combat veterans did not deny experiencing emotional reactions to combat and were willing to admit that they experienced fear and anxiety. (34)

As discussed earlier, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs model predicted that a source of conflict is eliminated if the soldier accepts the fact that he need not fear the loss of status and esteem if he exhibits fear while carrying out his mission. The soldier's self-esteem actually becomes stronger if he can freely admit his anxiety and deal with it realistically. Army training programs sought to enhance the soldier's self-esteem by providing

him with effective combat skills in order to reduce the disruptive effects of fear. (35) The goal was to condition soldiers with a set of habitual responses that were adaptable to various danger situations. (36)

During the war there were two major aspects of training which were directly related to the control of fear in dangerous situations. They were training which exposed the soldier to intense battle stimuli and training which prepared men to cope with specific kinds of danger situations.

The Army introduced "battle inoculation" into its training program in order to condition soldiers to deal with the circumstances they would experience in life threatening situations. By 1943, soldiers in basic training were routinely put through infiltration courses while live machinegun fire passed over their heads. (37) Combat veterans, evaluating their own training, felt that the lack of adequate exposure to battle stimuli prior to entering combat was a major deficiency. They felt that to lessen the initial shock of combat, men needed more training under live fire, needed to know the effects of enemy weapons, and needed to see and hear enemy planes. Training in how to protect themselves from enemy weapons was considered especially important. (38)

Training to prepare soldiers to cope with specific danger situations was done by educating them in the psychology and physiology of fear. The ability to train an unseasoned soldier to

deal with the feelings of anxiety that often precedes combat, as well as with the surprise and emotional terror of the experience, was not easy. However, knowledge of the general nature of the anticipated experience tended to reduce its impact. To discount the feelings of terror, it was made clear that fear was normal and that the enemy purposely tried to make the danger seem far greater than it actually was. This reduced the soldier's anxiety and prepared him for the real experience with much less worry. (39)

In this regard the primary group played a key role in the fear reduction process.

The Stouffer Study found that the primary group reduced the level of fear by providing a sense of protection and solidarity. In life threatening situations, soldiers who were helped by their feelings of responsibility toward their buddies were less likely to be frightened than soldiers who had less recourse to their comrades due to a lack of cohesiveness. By providing both affection and protection, primary groups reduced fear and facilitated the execution of commands. (40)

Fear was further reduced when soldiers felt their commanders took a personal interest in them. Men who served under officers who were willing to go through what they asked their men to go through felt more ready for combat than did soldiers who felt hostile toward their officers. Military life was tough and officers showed their worth by being aggressive, benevolent, and protective of the primary group. (41)

Lessons learned by officers of the 12th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division in the Huertgen Forest, demonstrated how subtle measures could reinforce the primary group. There was an example of the trial and error method that S.L.A. Marshall discussed. Learning by doing taught them the need to maintain team integrity and the "buddy pair" when making unit assignments for both hospital returnees and replacements. This need developed down to the lowest level as it was realized that members of small units learned standard operating procedures that were never made explicit, but were known by the individuals of the primary group. Although commanders assigned men who had recovered from wounds to their original platoons, the platoon leaders failed to place them in their original squad and fire team assignments, thus aggravating their reintegration into the unit. (42)

The 12th Infantry also found that digging small, single-man foxholes in pairs was better than digging two-man foxholes. The paired one man foxholes provided mutual support while reducing the vulnerability to overhead artillery fire by narrowing the width of the foxhole and increasing dispersion. For patrols, observation and listening posts, and other details, buddy pairs, fire teams, and squads were used as opposed to selecting men at random from the larger unit. Recalling du Picq's comments about the need for mutual supervision, the officers realized a need to consistently monitor the mental state of the men for aberrant behavior. (43) Combat was considered by some men as a

dare, but reactions that were out of context with the situation were an indication of unacceptable stress.

The "dare" aspect of combat suggested a major attitude difference between tried and untried combat troops. The Stouffer Study found that combat veterans had more self confidence in meeting the dare. Although nonveterans were more willing for combat and had greater confidence in their stamina, veterans had significantly more confidence in their combat skills. (44) Nonveteran replacements tended to feel more insecure in combat than veterans. They expressed this insecurity by seeking the protection found in "bunching up" under fire and were thus more likely to become casualties due to the increased fire their bunching up would draw. (45)

This does not imply that veterans were not affected by combat. One study made of a sample of U.S. riflemen in Italy found that 87 per cent of them had seen a close friend killed or wounded in action. (46) Casualties occurring to primary group members were more fearfully perceived than those which occurred to members of a group with whom an individual had lesser ties. (47) In units which experienced high casualty rates, the sight of one or more best friends killed was related to the amount of fear experienced by the survivors. (48) The riflemen bore the brunt of the fighting and suffered the most casualties.

Between a fifth and a quarter of the Army's strength was actually involved in the shooting, and these men suffered the bulk

of the casualties. "In Normandy, in 1944, out of a sample of over 3,500 battle casualties, the infantry, less than a quarter of the army as a whole, accounted for just over 71 per cent. Though the infantry made up only 67 per cent of a combat division's authorized strength, they suffered, on average, 92 per cent of its battle casualties." (49) Those who received the blue Combat Infantryman's Badge were the most likely recipients of the Purple Heart. Most of the fighting in World War II was done by a relatively small proportion of the troops whose casualty statistics were very high. (50)

Following Sun Tzu's dictum, "Know your enemy, know yourself; your victory will never be endangered," (51) the U.S. Army of World War II expended significant resources to study not just itself, but also the German Army. It was learned that small unit cohesiveness in the Wehrmacht significantly contributed to its remaining an effective fighting force until the last moments of the war, despite tactical catastrophes and severe operational setbacks.

The Wehrmacht remained cohesive and fought effectively until overrun and even then did not surrender. Shils and Tanowitz attributed this battlefield cohesion to the individual soldier's personal interactions and positive reinforcement from the primary group -- his squad, platoon, and company -- from which he received both esteem and respect. This cohesion was further strengthened by the soldier's perception that his officers and noncommissioned

officers cared for him, were men of honor, and deserved respect.

(52)

During World War II the German Army lost 1,709,739 men killed in action, including 59,965 officers. There were 675 general officers on the German Army list and of these 223 were killed in action, or 33 percent. Officers were highly visible and the continuous proximity of quality company grade officers to their troops emerged as a major factor in primary group cohesion. The troops expected and firmly believed that their officers would remain with them unto death. (53)

Where the social conditions were otherwise favorable, the primary bonds of group solidarity were dissolved only under the most extreme circumstances. It took a direct threat to the survival of the individual to break up that solidarity. Even then, the threat had to be "in situations where the tactical prospects were utterly hopeless, under devastating artillery and air bombardment, or where the basic food and medical requirements were not being met." (54)

Guy Sajer experienced such conditions with the Gross Deutschland Division on the Eastern Front.

We no longer fought for Hitler, or for National Socialism, or for the Third Reich -- or even for our fiancées, mothers or families trapped in bomb-ravaged towns. We fought from simple fear, which was our motivating power. The idea of death, even when we accepted it, made us howl with powerless rage. We fought for reasons which are perhaps shameful, but are, in the end, stronger than any doctrine. We fought for ourselves, so that we wouldn't die in holes filled with mud and snow. (55)

Further contributing to the cohesion of the German Army was their policy of rotating divisions out of the line for reconstitution. Their policy contrasted with the practice of the U.S. Army which treated the soldier as a component instead of part of cohesive units. (56)

A number of lessons were learned during World War II. First, the cohesive unit provided a support structure which helped the individual soldier withstand the pressures of combat. Second, realistic combat training, such as battle inoculation, and effective leadership strengthened the cohesiveness of a unit. Finally, the death of a member of the primary group, or of a close buddy, increased the fear level of the surviving group members.

THE KOREAN WAR

Information on cohesion during the Korean War focused on the buddy system as the primary social system in the U.S. Army. As in World War II, the buddy system arose from the interpersonal relations which occurred within the framework of the squad and the platoon. (57) Studies of these relationships were not concerned with the impact of battle death on the members of the primary group. The research was into the dynamics of leadership at the small unit level and the erosion of military authority. The insights provided by the Korean War are germane to this study as

they provide further insight into the moral domain of the small cohesive unit.

Korean War studies analyzed three aspects of combat at the small unit level. First, there was an investigation into the impact of danger on small unit leaders. Second, the Army examined the potential for collective defiance resulting from the intense interpersonal relationships which existed among combat soldiers. Third, the problem of providing adequate rewards for conforming soldiers was examined.

In analyzing the impact of small unit leadership at platoon level, it was found that as danger increased, the intensity and frequency of the platoon leader's interaction with his men heightened. The more he participated in their activities, the more he tended to share the sentiments of the men he commanded, and the more his willingness to use punishing sanctions available to him diminished. This occurred even though the situations in which his authority was required were more crucial than those encountered by commanders at higher levels. (58)

For the small unit leader, the chances were greater that the men he commanded would deviate from his orders because of the risks involved in compliance. The sanctions at his disposal were of no immediate value if defiance occurred during combat. The rifleman who refused to advance could only be punished by threats of sanctions to be imposed after the battle was over. The longer a unit was "on the line" the more intense these relationships

became, and the more behavior deviated from the norms of the organization. Officers who lived with their platoons tended to think like their men, and minimized their contacts with higher echelons. (59)

The intense, personal relationships in combat provided the potential for collective defiance. Collective defiance most often took the form of a passive refusal to move. This defiance becomes legitimate when the parent organization describes the unit as being "pinned down." At this point there is a collective recognition that the probability of survival is less than the chances of death and wounding, and invoking sanctions would be futile. (60) In this regard, the cohesiveness of the small unit in the face of danger has a negative impact on its combat effectiveness.

Another problem entailed providing an adequate reward for soldiers whose behavior conformed to expected standards. Survival, the greatest reward, was a chance situation and not something that could be granted by the leader. The organization was in a position where it could offer little more than symbols of compliance, such as decorations for valor. (61) The research implied that soldiers in combat were not motivated to any great extent by ex post facto awards. An award system that appeared to hinge on the literary ability of the person filling out the application, more than on the act of valor itself, did little to reinforce courage.

The erosion of military authority was further aggravated

by the appointment of acting squad leaders. The acting squad leader found that his relationship with his squad was threatened when he attempted to exert the authority of the position without the corresponding rank. Acting squad leaders did not have enough rank to differentiate them from other members of the squad. When a soldier with the required rank, but without combat experience, came in as a replacement, he was assigned as the squad leader. The acting squad leader was then returned to his former status. The effect was to reduce the significance of formal rank within the squad and platoon and to increase the informal importance of seniority. Men were reluctant to accept positions of authority when they knew that the organization could not give them the rank called for by the position due to the time in grade requirements imposed by regulations. Few men were motivated to move up to higher positions as there was little reward but almost certainly the weakening of relationships with peers to whom they might be compelled to return. (62)

The Korean War institutionalized the buddy system in combat. In this conflict, small unit leaders identified more with their men than with their superiors and the cohesiveness of the small unit could have a negative, as well as a positive influence on combat effectiveness. The self-preservation instinct was a motivator but the awards system and the promotion system was not.

THE VIETNAM WAR

Significant primary group ties were found among American combat soldiers fighting in Vietnam. Michael Garrod, a combat infantryman in Vietnam, echoed Guy Sajer's Wehrmacht experience in World War II. "We fight for each other. We're really tight here. Nobody else cares for us." (63) His message, like Sajer's, highlights the cohesiveness brought on by the combat experience.

Unit cohesiveness in Vietnam was studied by Gabriel and Savage. They attempted to show a correlation between the lack of small unit cohesion and the U.S. Army's defeat in the Vietnam War. (64) However, their statistics show that officer death rates from hostile action in Vietnam, an indicator of cohesiveness since the Shils and Janowitz study, were actually double those suffered during either World War II or Korea. (65) The officer corps, instead of having a negative influence, added substantial strength to combat units at a time when other supportive factions -- national will and recognition of service by the citizenry -- were fading. (66)

The Gabriel-Savage analysis was further flawed by the fact that it made no distinction between combat units and rear echelon units, the latter were derisively termed "REMF" by the former. Similar to World War II, only 14 percent of the American troops in Vietnam were engaged in combat activity. (67)

Donald Kirk, of the Chicago Tribune, reported on soldier

attitudes in Vietnam. He found that rear echelon soldiers did most of the "fraggings," used most of the drugs, and created most of the racial discord. He also perceived a lack of these disruptive elements in combat soldiers on the line. (68) For purposes of mutual survival, men in combat units worked hard at building trust, cohesion, and rapport. As Garrod said, they cared for each other.

This care for each other was particularly evident when it involved the wounded. Group aims were adjusted if a man was wounded and his plight was generally given a higher priority than the continuation of the battle. (69) Only 1% of the wounded reaching a medical facility during this war died and it was imperative that the unit get the wounded to medical treatment as quickly as the nature of his injuries required. (70) The Bell UH-1H "Dust-Off" helicopter was vital to evacuation and between 1965 and 1969 nearly 373,000 casualties were evacuated by helicopter. (71) How to request a medical evacuation was one of the first skills taught in Vietnam.

The need to prepare for combat was a reality for Vietnam era soldiers. Training gave the soldier a wealth of knowledge on how to survive on the battlefield so that he would be prepared to defend himself in a "kill or be killed" situation. The training of the combat soldier was geared for circumstances under which he might be wounded or die. (72)

Based on the hazards of armed conflict, a natural

relationship emerges between death and the fear of death in combat. (73) In a post-Vietnam study conducted at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, LTC C.L. Adams examined strategies used by ground combat officers and aviators to manage their fears in life-threatening circumstances. Five categories of fear management were used. They were religious orientation [faith in God], denial [either a refusal to admit a fear of death or rejection of the threat itself], avoidance [evasive strategies limiting the risks of encountering fear inducing situations], displacement [behavior characterized by concentration on something socially acceptable such as the job, soldiers, or the mission], and counter-control [the use of a variety of defense mechanisms to replace thoughts of fear, including aggression, rationalization, calculation, and confidence]. (74)

The raw data from the study revealed that aviators listed dying as their greatest single fear, followed by a fear of being wounded or maimed, and then a fear of being captured or tortured. The ground combat officer group stated they feared dying most, followed by a fear of being captured or tortured, and then a fear of being wounded or maimed. The sample population used by LTC Adams was not timid when it came to combat -- each officer surveyed had been awarded either the Silver Star, Distinguished Service Cross, or Medal of Honor, America's three highest awards for heroism, or the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry by the Republic of Vietnam. (75)

The study found that displacement was the method of choice for fear management by all respondents. Their behavior for dealing with the threat of being killed in combat was characterized by concentrating on activities which were socially acceptable given the circumstances. (76) Based on this study, LTC Adams felt that psychothanatology, the science related to realistically coping with death and dying, would have beneficial results for the Army if soldiers were taught strategies for reconciling the unsettling issue of death. (77) The study suggested that the Army should determine the coping strategies used by successful combat veterans and then teach these strategies to soldiers who then have tools to deal with the death situation and the feelings that develop. To ignore LTC Adams' work is to send the soldier out to face some of the most fearful life-threatening situations without the benefit of appropriate training.

The Vietnam War revealed that a different set of values were held by combat troops versus noncombat troops. Combat troops demonstrated greater cohesion and went to great lengths to take care of their own. Once again it was found that the need to prepare for combat was important, and a recommendation was made to teach soldiers strategies for dealing with death in combat. Since the end of the Vietnam War, the U.S. Army has adopted a peacetime posture. With the exception of Grenada, the bulk of the experience gained by the Army in the past decade and a half has been in the training environment.

CONTEMPORARY SCENE

The National Training Center (NTC) at Fort Irwin, California is designed to be a realistic battleground for the training of battalion task forces. Battalions participate in approximately six force-on-force exercises during a fourteen day rotation cycle. The force-on-force exercises use laser-based engagement simulation instrumentation to provide real-time casualty assessments. The simulator, the Multiple Integrated Laser Engagement System (MILES), is used on all principal weapons at the NTC. A casualty is assessed whenever a weapon is fired and the laser hits a MILES sensor. (78)

The lessons from NTC do not focus on small unit cohesion but rather on the combat effectiveness of the battalion. The NTC is an engagement simulation and as such, each battle takes on a decisive character which is rather rare in actual combat. The result is a tempo of fire and movement, and of killing, which is faster than normally experienced in actual combat. (79) A lack of prudence is often demonstrated due the fact that genuine terror of the life-threatening type is absent.

Absent war, the NTC provides the crucible for evaluating the U.S. Army's current AirLand battle doctrine. The NTC approximates the conditions of combat better than any other simulation known. The lessons learned are therefore germane, and they parallel the lessons of history to a remarkable extent.

The NTC reveals that it is crucial that commanders be forward in order to see the fastest moving battle and react quickly to changing conditions. Some commanders interpret this doctrine to mean that officers must be at the point of the attack or in the center of a defensive position on the enemy's main axis of advance. Sharing battle risks has been misinterpreted by some commanders to mean being at the point of greatest danger. (80)

The dilemma rests on the leader's maintaining credibility by sharing risks while surviving long enough to lead. Army leaders are taught to lead by example because sharing hardship is seen as a motivator. However, the point to be made is to encourage participation in the battle without fool-hardy heroics. The leader's primary responsibility is to direct and protect the unit, not risk his life unnecessarily. (81)

The frequency of leader casualties is high enough at the NTC that the transfer of control under combat conditions must be trained. The loss of the leader has a disruptive effect on both unit fire control and fire distribution. There is a loss of initiative while command and control is reestablished and subordinate leaders have to cope with assuming command at the worst possible time, in the midst of the battle. (82)

Experience and judgment enhance the commander's survivability -- veteran leaders are less likely to be hit the second time around. Historically, the death of officers in the U.S. Army has not contributed to unit disintegration. The major

impact of a commander's death does seem to be a loss of unit initiative until control is reestablished by the subordinate. (83)

At the NTC, the commander is sometimes given a Return to Duty card so that even if he or his vehicle is hit, he can continue the fight in another vehicle. The training benefit to the commander may be less than the training benefit accrued by the leaders at the lower echelons if they were required to assume command. It is impossible to determine the effectiveness of current doctrine and tactics if leaders are allowed to live despite their actions on the battlefield. Reintroducing them into the battle after they have been assessed as a casualty influences the outcome in indeterminate ways. (84)

The NTC provides the most realistic battlefield conditions possible, but even there the controllers must mandate that the wounded be given aid. In the excitement of the NTC battle the wounded are often ignored and soon become "Killed in Action." The systems in use at the NTC are unforgiving and the proof is irrefutable. The hits are electronically documented, the MILES equipment leaves little doubt, and the tank commander knows the instant his vehicle has been hit. As one tank commander so eloquently put it, "Oh man, we dead!" The need to provide for the protection of their units is brought home to leaders most vividly.

The NTC reveals the lethality of the modern battlefield. Command and leadership will rapidly turnover as the intensity level and tempo of warfare increase. The change of command

transition during combat operations is a reality. It needs to be trained for if the unit is to maintain its protective fire control and fire distribution. The death of the leader does not result in the disintegration of the unit, but it does cause the loss of initiative. Perhaps the real value of the lessons learned at the NTC is that it gives a frame of reference for what the future battlefield may be like.

THE FUTURE BATTLEFIELD

In a European scenario, the first day of the next war may bring as many as 1.7 million men together in combat. After two days the number of men involved in the fighting would grow to 2.8 million. By day ten, 6 million men would be fighting on a technologically sophisticated battlefield with weapons systems more deadly than anything witnessed before. (85)

The next war will be one of speed and mobility; penetration, encirclement, and envelopment; and firepower, death, and destruction. The initial clash of armies will witness the evaporation of the linear battlefield. Units under attack will trade space for time and be pushed back against units deployed in their rear. When this compression occurs, the number of targets in the kill zone will increase as will the intensity and lethality of the battle.

The combat zone has increased from a depth of ten miles during World War II to beyond forty miles today. Contemporary soldiers are equipped with lasers, infrared sights, night vision goggles, remote sensors and radars which not only acquire targets but also turn the nighttime battlefield into day. Modern tanks can locate a target in complete darkness at 3,500 yards and shoot with deadly accuracy while on the move. A lone infantryman can shoot down an aircraft or kill a tank. The explosive power of artillery rounds has increased almost seven times and a Soviet BM-27 Rocket Launcher Battalion can fire 720 conventional rockets in thirty seconds and put thirty-five tons of explosives on a target seventeen miles away. (86)

The lethality of the future battlefield will tax systems designed to protect the soldier. Men are willing to make the seemingly irrational decision to risk their lives in battle if they believe that they will receive prompt lifesaving aid if they are wounded. (87) This may not occur.

The extended and isolated nature of the battlefield will overburden the medical evacuation system. Scarce and expensive helicopters will not be risked to evacuate every wounded soldier from the action and the volume of casualties will swamp medical facilities. (88) Evacuation will be hampered by enemy deep operations and by civilian refugees, many of whom will also be casualties. The Geneva Convention mandates that casualties at military aid stations be treated in order of medical priority

whether they are our own soldiers, the enemy's soldiers, or civilians. (89) To do this the U.S. military has about half the number of doctors it had during the Vietnam War. There are only 149 anesthesiologists available for wartime requirements and only 420 surgeons. Any delay in treatment of other than the hopelessly or trivially wounded will add to the mortality rate by denying care to those who otherwise could have survived. (90)

Chemical weapons could make large-scale medical treatment impossible. Thorough decontamination is required before a doctor or medic can even get near a chemically contaminated casualty. On the chemically contaminated battlefield the terror of combat is heightened as the soldier is psychologically trapped inside his protective clothing and physically isolated from his comrades.

(91) Soviet and Western studies warn that a chemical attack on trained, warned, and protected soldiers will result in either 10-15% fatalities or serious casualties. This results from unavoidable human error, indiscipline, communications failure, and systems failures which compound the effects of the damage. (92) On untrained, unwarned, or unprepared soldiers, mass casualties will result.

Mass casualties on the future battlefield will overwhelm the graves registration (GRREG) capabilities of the U.S. Army.

(93) The Army has considered GRREG a non-essential function during peacetime to the extent that planning for wartime requirements has been inadequate in each of our wars and most

recently in the Grenada Operation. (94) "The specter of thousands of dead American soldiers unidentified, unattended, and unevacuated, (will) have a disastrous impact on the fighting force, both in terms of morale and commitment." (95)

Soldiers on the future battlefield could face a grim situation. Dispersed, in small groups, morale and effectiveness may rapidly decline. Isolation will cause them to be unsure of their goals and of the outcome of their continued efforts. Isolation will also cause the disruption of the arrangement of the soldier's primary group. The tempo of battle will be such that the welding of squad, platoon, and company cohesion will be difficult.

CONCLUSION

History shows that the key to understanding the problem of death in a cohesive unit is the fact that the danger of being killed or maimed imposes a strain so great that it causes the soldier to break down. It is the fear of death or injury which makes combat so harrowing an experience. Death, therefore, seriously degrades the bonds of the cohesive military unit.

Military cohesion and motivation are rooted in intensely personal attachments at the small unit level. Casualties occurring to primary group members in the cohesive unit produce more fear than those which occur to members of a group with whom an

individual is less closely bound. Of all the causes of breakdown in combat, the death of a soldier's buddy has the most powerful impact. That possibility, and the threat to his own existence, is an ever present reality for the combat soldier.

Trust in the primary group is an essential part of the soldier's development. At the lowest levels, the individual is dependent on his buddies to an extraordinary degree. This dependency may have a positive impact, as was shown in our World War II discussion, or it may have a negative impact, as was displayed in Janowitz's study of the Korean War. Regardless of whether this dependency is positive or negative, history indicates that it will exist.

Soldiers train in order to gain the knowledge needed to survive on the battlefield. Survivability of the individual soldier, his buddy, and his leader are important to the survival of the cohesive unit. Leaders in charge of combat units must be aware of the impact of fear on their soldiers, be taught how to deal with their own fears, and how to strengthen the cohesiveness of the unit at the same time.

In the final analysis, the evidence indicates that cohesion in a military unit is a function of the strong, interpersonal loyalties that develop among soldiers who are united in hardship and danger, and who are sustained by leaders enduring the same conditions. (96) A cohesive and disciplined unit is built on mutual trust, respect, and confidence. Small unit cohesion

protects men from the stresses of the battlefield and provides them with the moral strength required to fight.

IMPLICATIONS

The implications of this study concern five areas. First, cohesive bonding of the small unit needs to occur prior to combat. Second, realistic combat training should include techniques developed by the relatively new science of psychothanatology. Third, the structure of the buddy system as it is currently configured in the U.S. Army may be in need of overhaul. Fourth, military medicine plays a key role in maintaining the moral contract. Finally, the loss of the leader in combat is an eventuality that must be prepared for.

In our past wars, much of the cohesion that existed in the U.S. Army was built in battle. This was due to the Army's individual replacement system and a policy which kept divisions in protracted combat. The tempo of battle was such that the final welding of small units was done during the initial week to ten days of combat. (97)

The anticipated size and lethality of the future battlefield, the anticipated number of casualties by death and wounding, and the speed of events during the battle will disrupt the combat effectiveness of the average military unit. Obtaining

high levels of group cohesiveness and unit morale during the initial week to ten days of combat will be improbable, if not impossible. Therefore, the cohesion which protects soldiers from breakdown, and the morale that shields them from the stresses of battle, cannot be built solely on the bonds of comradeship that develops between soldiers during combat. Hence, the bonding must occur prior to combat.

The weight of the bonding, and its positive or negative effects, is highly dependent on the policies and organization of the Army. The U.S. Army must vigilantly guard against any policy, structure, or organization which does not reinforce the cohesiveness of the small unit. The universe of the soldier revolves around his squad and platoon. It is at this level that group bonding is achieved, group norms are defined, and standards of behavior are set. (98) It is at this level that relations are established and it is at this level that much of the Army's combat effectiveness is defined. Great effort must be taken to constantly strengthen squads and platoons if success is to be had on the future battlefield.

The surest way to strengthen the Army's squads and platoons is with realistic combat training. The object is to teach soldiers how to survive on the lethal battlefield. Confidence stems from being more capable than the opponent and from not being caught unawares. Dealing with the emotional trauma of death in the midst of a fire fight has been too much for some to handle.

Perhaps LTC Adams' research on the psychothanatological defense mechanisms used by successful combat veterans has applicability for today's Army. If this training provides the soldier with the tools needed to lessen the shock of witnessing the demise of a buddy, than it is vital for his well being that he receive such training. The current alternative of no psychological preparation at all is unacceptable.

The buddy system may itself be in need of overhaul. The two-man buddy system institutionalized during the Korean War may be inadequate. The Army needs to examine the benefits provided by a three-man buddy system. The three-man system has been used effectively by battle hardened units in the Chinese Army, the People's Army of North Vietnam, the Viet Cong, and the U.S. Marine Corps. The three-man buddy system provides a number of benefits over the two-man system. The third man provides moral support if a member is killed, provides physical support needed to evacuate a man if he is wounded, and prevents the disintegration of the team when a member is killed.

The three-man buddy system will make the leaders job of maintaining cohesion easier. Receiving large numbers of replacements complicates the development of primary group cohesion, retards the assimilation of new soldiers into the unit, and lengthens the time required to familiarize soldiers with the unwritten procedures common to all small units. Two men orienting a third is more easily and uniformly handled than one man

orienting another. When mutual survival depends on the strength of the buddy system, the three-man concept is more beneficial for the replacement and the unit than the two-man system.

In regards to survival, the moral contract is more binding today than ever. Today's soldier must have a reasonable assurance of surviving on the battlefield. War is risky business, but it need not be any more risky than necessary. The leader must know what the tradeoffs are every time he makes a decision and he must risk little if little is to be gained.

The leader must also be trained to appreciate the forces at work when a buddy is wounded. That medevac helicopters in Vietnam were fired upon by friendly units for refusing to land until the area was secured is not common knowledge. That it occurred, regardless of how irrational it may seem, is certain. The U.S. Army's medical system must be adequately resourced to meet the challenges it will face on the future lethal battlefield. Failure to do so will be an irreparable violation of the moral contract.

The final implication is the death of the leader. Based on the record, the death of a combat leader does not result in the disintegration of the unit, but it does cause the loss of the initiative. The combat leader is charged with an obligation to accomplish his mission and to take care of the welfare of his soldiers. He fails on both counts if these tasks are not accomplished in his absence. A military unit, and especially a

combat unit, must be trained and prepared to react, as appropriate, even if the leader is killed. The impromptu change of command in the midst of a fire fight has been the hallmark of battle from Gustavus Adolphus in the 1632 Battle of Luetzen to LTC H. Jones at the Falkland Islands in 1982. The mark of the leader is not what his small cohesive unit accomplishes when he is present, but what it accomplishes when he is not.

ENDNOTES

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